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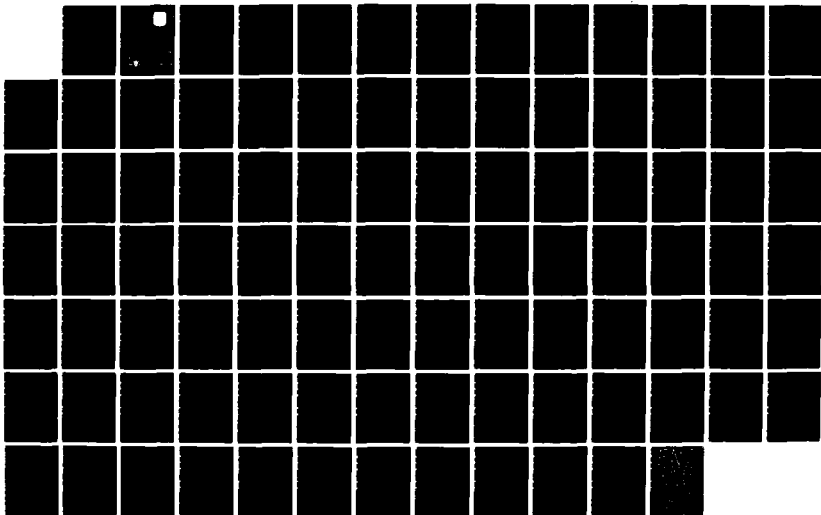
NATIONALITIES IN THE SOVIET MILITARY: A PROBLEM FOR  
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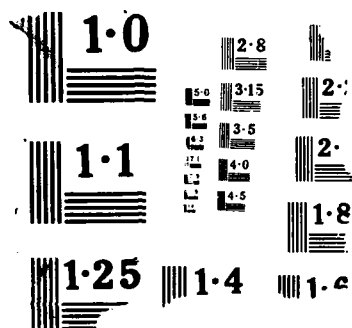
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# STUDY PROJECT

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## NATIONALITIES IN THE SOVIET MILITARY: A PROBLEM FOR PERESTROIKA?

BY

COLONEL DONALD D. DALZIEL, CANADIAN FORCES

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SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO. A12237	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) Nationalities in the Soviet Military: A Problem for Perestroika?		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Individual Study
7. AUTHOR(s) Donald D. Dalziel		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS U.S. Army War College Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		12. REPORT DATE 31 May 1988
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 90
		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) UNCLASSIFIED
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report)  Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Nationalities, Soviet Military		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) There has been a continuing debate over the effect of the Soviet ethnic nationalities on the Red Army and Navy for many years. Recent disturbances, reported in far more detail than ever before under the impact of glasnost, have accentuated the problems. Perestroika, or restructuring, is being applied with tremendous pressure by General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev to all facets of Soviet society and government, including the military. This study examines the problems, their basis, their effect on the Soviet military, and the impact of perestroika on them.		

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The roots of the nationalities problems lie in Tsarist Russia before the Revolution, and, despite their propaganda to the contrary, the Communists have not been able to solve them; in fact, their policies have probably exacerbated them. Today, the rate of growth of the non-Slavic people of the Soviet Union, primarily the Muslims, is far greater than that of the Slavs, and it is projected that they will soon be the majority. The military, through the conscription system and carefully controlled ethnic mixing, are attempting to carry out their tasking to be the instructors to the nation and to produce the "new Soviet man", but they reflect the same problems as the country as a whole.

Many Soviets have been aware of the problems for some time, but they are now being publicized through glasnost, and the scope and severity have been a surprise to many. Western analysts project many different views of the impact of the nationalities on the military, but all agree that there is a problem of some magnitude, and that it does effect their operational capability to some degree. From the Soviet viewpoint, it is clear that they are becoming more and more aware of these problems, and in particular the "irregular relations" among servicemen of different seniorities, much of which is based on nationalities, and see a need to take action.

When perestroika was introduced to the country in the spring of 1985, the military leadership did not react, and it was not until early 1987 that they finally began to do so. Initially, their efforts were rather uncoordinated, but their program gradually took shape. They are now concentrating on strengthening leadership, organization, and discipline and order not only in the military itself, but also in the areas of pre-service training and in the reserves.

They appear to be making some progress, and there is potential for more, but it is too early to make a definitive judgement now. After the upcoming Party Meeting and the fall draft intake, a better assessment of their success might, and should, be attempted, as this could have a real and significant impact on the ethnic nationalities problems and on the operational effectiveness of the Red Army and Navy.

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NATIONALITIES IN THE SOVIET MILITARY:  
A PROBLEM FOR PERESTROIKA?

An Individual Study Project

by

Colonel Donald D. Dalziel, Canadian Forces

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U.S. Army War College  
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013  
31 May, 1988

## ABSTRACT

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FORMAT: Individual Study

DATE: 31 May, 1988 PAGES: 87 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

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In the USSR a developed socialist society has been built. ... It is a society of mature socialist social relations, in which on the basis of ... factual equality of all its nations and nationalities and their fraternal co-operation, a new historical community of people has been formed---the Soviet people.<sup>1</sup>

(Constitution of the USSR, 1977)

Comrades, we have every right to say that the nationalities question has been solved in our country. The Revolution paved the way for the equality of our nations... One of the greatest gains of the October Revolution is the friendship of the Soviet peoples.<sup>2</sup>

(Mikhail Gorbachev, November 1987)

To put it briefly, ... we must get down to some very substantive work on nationalities policy, along all avenues, both in theory and practice. This is the most fundamental and vital question facing our society.<sup>3</sup>

(Mikhail Gorbachev, February 1988)

The demonstrations for the unification of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh began Feb 20 in Stepanakert, the capital of the small region. The rallies quickly spread to Yerevan, where they swelled from several thousand to well over a million. On Feb 28, a day after the Yerevan protests were suspended, riots broke out in the Azerbaijani city of Sumgait, reportedly as revenge for the Armenian rallies. Altogether, 32 died in the Sumgait riots, 12 were raped and 197 were injured, according to official Soviet sources.<sup>4</sup>

(Washington Post, 24 March 1988)

#### A QUESTION OF NATIONALITIES

The nationalities issue in the Soviet Union and in the Red Army has intrigued and bedevilled students and analysts, both within and outside the country, since the Great October Socialist Revolution in 1917. In fact, the question arose long before the Revolution, and was a central facet of Russian internal and foreign policy for centuries before Lenin came to power. Although their actions very often belied their words, Soviet leaders, at least until recently, rarely admitted that there was a problem. Conversely, western analysts most often assumed the problem, but

could not agree upon the scope or the potential impact on either the country or the armed forces.

On one hand, S. Enders Wimbush and Alex Alexiev concluded: "Although the Soviet armed forces should be viewed as nothing less than a formidable military machine, still ethnic problems suggest existing or potential vulnerabilities that should receive the attention of U.S. military planners. For example, based on the evidence contained in this study, we can postulate the likelihood of support force reliability short-comings, basic training inadequacies, and individual training deficiencies...Over the long term, unit training deficiencies may become evident...the Soviets could face limitations on force size...Moreover, the specter of heightened internal security dilemmas cannot be ruled out."<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, Ellen Jones decided that: "The USSR's changing ethnic mix has presented Soviet military authorities with many of the same problems faced by other states with an ethnically mixed military force. A review of the evidence bearing on this issue suggests we should be cautious in accepting at face value the Soviet propaganda claim that the ethnic diversity is a source of strength. Equal caution, however, is warranted in assessing interpretations that portray minority participation in the military as a source of insurmountable difficulty. Soviet military authorities are well aware of the problems and potential problems...The military leadership has devised a series of programs to deal with these problems, programs which...seem to be working very well."<sup>6</sup>

Divergent conclusions such as these make the issue worthy of continued investigation and study. The February, 1988 statement of General Secretary Gorbachev, which indicates that this is the most fundamental and vital issue facing Soviet society today, accentuates the need and adds further impetus. Although initially the military did not really properly apply the precepts of *perestroika*, there are many indications that they are now doing so, and are catching up quickly. The results which they achieve (or indeed do not achieve) may have a direct bearing on the nationalities questions for the country as a whole, as well as on the operational effectiveness of the Red Army and Navy, and should therefore be of particular concern to all of us.

Our interest, therefore, lies in a number of areas. What are these nationalities? Is there indeed a problem, and if so, what is its nature? What is the scope of the problem, and are there military implications? What actions have been taken, and what changes have been made in the name of *perestroika*? Do they have a chance of success? An examination of these questions provides a basis and outline for study of the subject.

#### THE ETHNIC NATIONALITIES

The Soviets are in the habit of stating that there are "more than one hundred nationalities" represented in the Soviet Union. Estimates of the actual number vary between 102 and 120, depending on the definition of a nationality or an ethnic group, and how one interprets the census data. However, the absolute num-

bers matter little, as the Soviet Union is without doubt "one of the world's most ethnically heterogeneous countries in terms both of the numbers of ethnic groups and of their respective sociocultural characteristics."<sup>7</sup> A census has been conducted at intervals of about ten years, with the latest available figures being from that of 1979. Although there is evidence that the methods and criteria of the census introduced a bias, particularly in the areas of the nationality of children of mixed parentage and of native languages, which decreased the impact of the smaller ethnic groups,,<sup>8</sup> these data provide the only information available, and must be used for any study of this subject.

Of the total USSR population of 262 million, the Russians were 137 million, or 52% (all figures are rounded for ease of reference). There were only 21 other groups numbering more than one million, and the additional 70 groups listed in the published data made up only 4% of the total population, clearly demonstrating the very uneven distribution. Fifteen of the largest groups have their own Republic. Of the remaining seven with a population of over one million, four (the Tatars, Baskirs, Chuvashi and Mordvinians) have autonomous republic status, and the other three (Germans, Jews and Poles) are geographically dispersed.<sup>9</sup>

The Soviet nations can be divided into two major groupings: the Slavs, with a total population of 190 million representing 73% of the population of USSR; and the Muslims, with 44 million and 17%. The Slavs include Russians, Ukrainians (42 million and 16%), Belorussians (9 million and 4%), and Poles (1 million and

0 %). The Muslims include: Kazakhs (7 million and 3%); Central Asians (Uzbeks with 12 million and 4%, Tadzhiks with 3 million and 1%, Turkmen with 2 million and 0.6%, and Kirgiz, also with 2 million and 0.6%); Azerbaijani (5 million and 2%); Tatars (6 million and 2%); Bashkir (1 million and 0.5%); and several other smaller groups. The remaining 10% of the total population consists of the Caucasian Christians (Georgians and Armenians with 8 million and 3%), Jews (2 million and 0.7%), Germans (2 million and 0.8%), Balts (Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians with 5 million and 2%), Moldavians (3 million and 1%), and many other small groups, which total only 5% of the population.<sup>10</sup>

The Slavs, then, constitute the great majority of the people of the Soviet Union, and the Russians have an absolute majority. However, study of the last three census' indicates some interesting trends in population growth rates. Overall, the population is growing, but the total rate of growth is slowing (from 1.8% in the 1950's to 0.8% in 1981), and several waves reflecting periods of reduced birthrate are moving through the statistics, with the latest low to affect the military conscription base being in 1979. Like the population itself, the rate of decline is also unevenly distributed, with the Slavs and Balts showing a very steep drop, and the Muslim groups a very shallow decline, or even an actual increase in some cases. Several studies indicate that, at current rates, the Slavs would require 150 years to double their population, but the Muslims would need only 30. The same studies project that, by 2000, the Slav share of the population will decline from the present 73% to 65%, and the Muslims will

increase from 17% to 20-25%. By 2050, the Slavs will no longer constitute the majority of the total USSR population, and by 2080, at the 41% point, the Muslims will pass the Slavs. At the same time, the Russians apparently lost their absolute majority in 1983, will fall below replacement level growth in 1995, and by 2025, will be fewer than the Muslims. These studies postulate that the variance in fertility rates will be exacerbated by continuing shifts in migration and urbanization, and changes in abortion and death rates.<sup>11</sup>

There is also a school which believes that the rate of change has been "consistently overstated," and that there is no population "crisis" facing the Soviets. This group does admit, however, that there is a population shift occurring, to the extent that almost all the future additions to the Soviet labor force will come from Central Asia, and that even though the numbers may not change so quickly as to cause the majority to in turn change so soon, the government will be forced to work to accommodate the new situations which will face them.<sup>12</sup>

Whether one accepts either extreme, or even if one strikes a middle course between the two, it is clear that the ethnic minority situation, and in particular the changing ethnic ratios together with rising nationalism, constitute an area of potential grave difficulty for the Soviets, and in particular for the Russians. Any prevalent nationalities problems will without doubt be multiplied and could perhaps even lead to a dissolution of the nation unless a concerted effort is made to resolve them.

## A NATIONALITIES PROBLEM?

In the fall of 1985, during an interview<sup>13</sup> with Admiral N.N. Amyelko, who was then one of the First Deputy Chiefs of the General Staff, one of the areas discussed was the potential difficulty posed by the number of different nationalities serving in the Army and the Navy. He indicated that, during the period he had commanded the Pacific Ocean Fleet, from 1962 until 1969, he had always had "at least thirty different nationalities" serving on his flagship alone. He further indicated that this did not pose a problem at all, as the sailors were united in their patriotism and in their love for the Motherland. However, when pursued on the question of communications and common language, he did state that there were "some areas to be resolved", but that this did not affect their operations any more than the Canadian Navy was affected by the fact that Canada has two official languages. (The fact that the Canadian Navy has ships which communicate internally in English, and other ships which communicate internally in French was not discussed). In Admiral Amyelko's view, the large number of nationalities serving on board one ship or in a single unit caused no difficulties. Nationalities were not a problem for the Soviet Armed Forces.

Early the next year, in Frunze, the capital of Kirgizstan, a young Kirgiz encountered in a restaurant volunteered that he had recently completed his term in the Red Army, as a technician in a Division in the Russian Republic, near Leningrad. He was an

intelligent youth whose facial features and coloring resembled those of a Chukchi, the Russian Eskimo. When asked if he had encountered any difficulties because he was a Central Asian serving so far from home, he innocently replied: "Of course not. Once people discovered that I was Kirgiz and not a Chukchi, I had no problems at all!"

Later, in another Republic, a Central Asian who taught the Russian language in the local high school told of his frustration because his students were not interested in his subject. They could not see the importance of learning Russian as a second language when everyone they knew spoke their own native language, and the newspapers, radio and television were all in this same language. As a result, they did not do well on their exams, and this reflected very poorly on the teacher, who was forced to do considerable extra work to make up for the shortcomings of his students. When the time came for them to join the military, they did not understand enough Russian to be capable of working in the language. On another occasion, a young Russian university student who had lived all his life in Central Asia admitted that he spoke only Russian. He said that he probably should learn the local language, but had no real reason to do so, so had never bothered. Through the influence of his family, he had received an exemption from military service, and had not been called up by the local commissariat, or draft board, but rather was assigned directly to the Reserve as a officer.

These young men, from both sides of the ethnic fence, did



not exactly exemplify the view on nationalities and language espoused by Admiral Amyelko. His opinion was also not universally substantiated by all his countrymen. In fact, despite official proclamations and protestations to the contrary, the people of the Soviet Union, Russians and others alike, appeared to be very conscious of their different nationalities, and very racially-oriented in their approach to them. One very quickly noticed the twist of the lips and tone of voice which automatically accompanied the terms *Uzbeki* or *Chukchi*, most often used almost as epithets. One day in Moscow, a lady was amazed to see a man commit a serious offence. She told a Soviet, a Russian, about it, and evoked considerable surprise and concern. When the man appeared nearby, and was pointed out to the Russian, the surprise clearly turned to disgust, and she was very quickly and properly informed that the man was a *Gruzhinski*, and not a Russian, the implication obviously being that one could expect that sort of behavior from Georgians and that although the crime was offensive, it was not at all unexpected. Conversely, in other Republics, even the well-trained and usually very professional local Intourist guides could not always hide their distrustful envy of the Russians in general and the *Moskvichi* in particular.

Interestingly, much of this mutual antagonism surfaced in economic concerns, with each group envious of the others' access to different products. Most *Moskvichi* were very vocal in their condemnation of the Central Asians who brought fresh vegetables and fruits to the markets to sell at prices considered to be quite outrageous (and they were). They became even more vocal

when the same Central Asians also used their visits to the capital to spend the rubles they had accumulated to purchase goods which, to the Moskvichi, were in short supply, and were rightfully theirs. From the Central Asian perspective, these items were never seen in their Republics and were evidence that the Russians looked after themselves first, despite the propaganda about brotherhood among the peoples. These feelings visibly intensified during times of extraordinary shortages such as the six-week period in the spring of 1987, when there were no potatoes available in Moscow, and when, for most of 1987, no fresh coffee was to be found in any of the regular stores. There were equally hard feelings in Central Asian republics which were forced to restrict gasoline use to an extent such that both private and public transportation were severely curtailed, and people had to endure lines at gas pumps for as long as 10 hours, when there were no corresponding problems in Moscow. There was a certain amount of fact in both sides of this antagonism, but as neither was willing to accede to the others' view, the feelings became noticeably stronger and deeper.

There was also a great deal of antagonism readily evident in Armenia, but, at the time, it was clearly directed at the Turks, and not at the Russians or at other nationalities of the Soviet Union. Other than the single statue of Lenin in the central square in Yerevan, the traditional monuments honoring him or the soldiers of The Great Patriotic War were not to be seen in this Republic. Instead, there were impressive memorials to the "martyrs" who were "massacred" by the Turks in 1915. The bitterness

was still very evident, very real, and very near the surface. Although there was no visible perception of a quarrel with the Russians, it was readily apparent that there was little empathy between the peoples. The Armenians accepted the Soviets as the lesser of two evils, needing them for their battle with the Turks and for the economic benefits which they brought, but they ignored many of the tenets of Leninism. For example, virtually without exception, newborns are baptised in the Armenian Christian Church. When questioned on the official state attitude towards this practice, a young local girl said that the authorities had given up trying to discourage even the younger parents, as Armenian Christianity was too old and too well established as a way of life to be changed by a simple official policy and a few government edicts.

The Armenians had more regular contact with the West than any other group encountered in the Soviet Union, primarily due to emigrants to America who maintained contact with their families (and also sent them money). There was a regular weekly flight into Yerevan from San Francisco, at the time the only international flight into a Soviet city other than Moscow or Leningrad. The Armenians appeared to be striking their own course, but exhibited an almost ambivalent view of the rest of the Soviet Union.

The friction between Russians and people of the Baltic states was also not so visibly apparent as that between the Russians and the Central Asians, but officials took care not to

upset the uncertain balance, as trouble always seemed to be just beneath the thin veneer of friendship and calm. When travelling in these Republics, one quickly learned that it was far better to be recognized as an English-speaking foreigner than as a Russian, because the reception was decidedly and uniquely more friendly and helpful. Like the Armenians and many of their Central Asian compatriots, the Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians generally think of themselves first as citizens of their Republic rather than as Soviets. Once, on an Intourist bus at an airport in a southern city, a harried guide discovered that she had three more people than she should have on her bus. She announced loudly and stridently that the bus was for foreigners only, and that all others should remove themselves immediately. When no one left, she started questioning individual tourists: "Are you a foreigner?"---"Yes, I'm Finnish."; "Are you foreigners?"--- "Yes, we're Canadians."; "Are you a foreigner?"--"Yes, I'm Estonian." Needless to say, the bus soon had the correct number on board, but there were three very unhappy Estonians on the ramp with the rest of the Soviets. This illustrates only the surface of a very emotional and difficult situation for both sides of the predicament.

Although these perceptions were admittedly founded on a rather narrow base, it was readily apparent to even a casual observer that there were indeed some very serious and long-standing problems between nationalities in the Soviet Union, despite official denials and references only to nationalities "issues" and "questions" which had been solved by the CPSU, and

which existed only in capitalist countries.<sup>14</sup>

#### THE ROOTS OF THE PROBLEM

The origins of the problem belong in the Middle Ages, during the rise and expansion of the "patrimonial state",<sup>15</sup> in which both political authority and ownership of all property were centralized in the hands of the ruler, the Russian. Almost all of the many nationalities now part of the USSR were forcibly enfolded into the Russian Empire during Tsarist times, long before the Revolution of 1917. First the Russians and then the Soviets attempted to assimilate them as subservient states and peoples. The Tsars tried subjugation by force. Lenin promised self-determination and freedom for all minorities, but then never allowed this to happen. By the end of their Civil War, the new leaders had re-established control and consolidated their hold on most of the old Empire, and in 1922, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was proclaimed. The USSR evolved over the next 35 years into the present amalgum of 15 Republics, through division of the original four Republics, and expansion, either by means of conquest or by agreement through coercion, into Finland, the Baltics, Poland, and Romania. The essential criteria for admission to the Union as a Republic were a titular nationality of at least one million people forming a majority of the population of an area, and independant economic potential, together with an external border or access to the sea.<sup>16</sup> These did not really address the problems of integrating the nationalities, and indeed may have provided the seeds for future difficulty, as pockets of

different nationalities often became part of a larger group (such as the Armenian Christian area of Nagorno-Karabakh which became part of Muslim Azerbaijan). The principles of the "patrimonial state" have in fact changed very little, and provide an historical basis for the often strained relationships between the Russians and the other Soviet nationalities, as well as between the other ethnic groups themselves.

Even the nationalities which were granted Republic status (and particularly those with a history of independance), did not readily accept the new Soviet rule. For example, in 1924 there was an armed uprising in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, in which several Red Army units were completely wiped out. The insurrection lasted three weeks, but the incredibly severe reprisals which followed, even though conducted by their countryman Stalin, lasted much longer, and Georgia was held brutally in check during his entire rule. (Ironically, there was no further trouble in the Republic until 1956, when Krushchev made his first charges concerning Stalin's reign of terror, and the Georgians once more took to the streets of Tbilisi, demonstrating against the attacks on their favorite son, now that he was quite safely dead).<sup>17</sup> The collectivization of the peasant farms in the Ukraine and other southern republics, and the attendant brutality, famine, and starvation, led to so much hatred of the Russians that the Nazi invaders were welcomed as liberators when they entered the Soviet Union in 1941. The same hard feelings still linger among the Ukrainians, but the Russians have also not forgotten.<sup>18</sup> The forced migration of millions during World War

II, primarily based on nationalist grounds, resulted in the disappearance of a number of national territories. Most were restored, at least in some form, in 1957, and the people were allowed to return to their historic homelands. Two, however, the Crimean Tatars and Volga Germans, have never been allowed to return. Periodically, they have made representations for the matter to be resolved, but no action has been taken (or indeed can be taken, without creating a precedence and new and even larger problems in other areas). The Crimean Tatar demonstrations in Moscow in July, 1987 pressed the limits of glasnost. Unlike many of the other nationalities, their disagreement is clearly with the Russians, who they blame for depriving them of their homeland.

The concept of the hierarchy of nationalities in which all are equal, but the Russians more equal, was carefully nurtured in order to gain credibility for the notion that the "little brothers" owed everything to their Russian "elder brothers." Central Asian history was manipulated in order to give the impression that, until the arrival of the "enlightened" Russians and their Soviet power, the Central Asians had a very primitive society and culture, when in fact their written language appeared over two centuries before that of the Russians.<sup>19</sup> The Russians proudly claim that they are doing much to preserve the folklore and heritage of the Central Asian and other republics, but they are really preparing very sanitized versions, producing history which will "only add skin-deep color to Soviet life."<sup>20</sup> The purpose of this program, of course, is to denigrate the entire ethnic society in order to enhance Soviet, and therefore Russian,

political control.

The concept of Russian supremacy also became an accepted state of affairs among the Soviet and even the Republic leaders, despite the fact that none of the CPSU General Secretaries until Andropov were of totally-Russian origin. Brezhnev was quoted in Pravda in 1971 as having stated that the Russian people, by means of "revolutionary energy, willingness to undertake self-sacrificial efforts, industriousness, and fundamental internationalism have won the genuine respect of all the peoples of our socialist homeland".<sup>21</sup> Andropov took the concept one step further, and planned the absorption of non-Russian nationalities into the Russian nationality. His speeches and those of other leaders, even many from the Republics, were unstinting in their praise of the Russians. Even Eduard Shevardnadze, in 1976 when he was First Secretary of the Georgian Party, said: "Georgia is known as a sunny country, but for us the sun rises not in the East, but in the North, in Russia."<sup>22</sup> Later leaders have carried on the practice, regularly building up the Russians at the expense of the rest. In his CPSU Central Committee Report to the 27th Congress on 25 February, 1986, Gorbachev stated: "The labor successes of the Moscovites are well known." Although he went on to state that they could probably have done better work, he reserved special criticism for "deviations from the norms of party life" which were tolerated in Kirghizia, the "negative processes" which were "manifested in their most acute form" among the leaders in Uzbekistan, and similar irregularities in Alma-Ata.<sup>23</sup> Again, in his speech to the CPSU Central Committee on



2 November, 1987, he said: "Today ...the peoples of our country express their profound respect and gratitude to the Great Russian people for its...invaluable contribution to the creation, development, and consolidation of the socialist union of free and equal republics..."<sup>24</sup> Even the military leaders make the point clearly. In an October, 1987 article in Kraznaya Zvezda, the official newspaper of the Red Army, Colonel V. Filatov, a special correspondent, said: "...the word Muscovite has always symbolized the highest qualities of people, including those in military uniform. Muscovites in the Army and Navy were in every respect an example to be emulated for life. They were models of efficiency, discipline, military skill and valor. ... Today people in the Army want to emulate Muscovites. Today people in the Army should emulate Muscovites."<sup>25</sup> If nothing else, it would seem that articles such as these would unite all the other nationalities in their alienation from the Russians and in particular from the Muscovites, but it clearly illustrates the mind-set of the leaders, and the acceptance of Russian supremacy.

The roots of the nationalities problems are well established in the history and life of the Soviet Union. From Tsarist times, the other ethnic nationalities were subjugated to Russian rule, and although the words may have been changed under the Soviet state, the fact of Russian supremacy is as strong as ever, at least in the eyes of the Russians if not the others. This, then, is the basis of much of the problem.

## THE PROBLEM ACCELERATES

With the impetus provided by glasnost, all sides appear to be hardening their views and their approach to this perennial problem. The scope of demonstrations in 1986, 1987, and early 1988 by Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Uzbeks, Tatars, Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians would have been unheard of in the very recent past. They cannot be characterized by a common cause: the Armenians demonstrated against the Azerbaijani's, with perhaps a little anti-Soviet flavor thrown in; the Azerbaijani's rioted against the Armenians, also with a slight anti-Soviet touch; and the others were all taking on long-standing disagreements with the Soviets. In each case, the anti-Soviet portion had a very distinct anti-Russian part. Reactions such as the replacement of a few Russian leaders with locals, and appeals to allow time to make corrections, will work for a while, but are not permanent solutions. Similarly, the Politburo announcement on 23 March, 1988, of an eight-year plan to resolve the problems of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno-Karabakh was not really a plan at all. In typical Soviet fashion, all that it did was to order the Republics and Ministries to solve the pressing problems of the economic, social and cultural development of the region.<sup>28</sup> There may well have been more direct action proposed or even implemented but not announced, but that will not appease those involved, who will undoubtedly take the Politburo announcement as a blunt rejection of their grievance. The peoples' new-found liberties and freedom to demonstrate were clearly threatened in the same announcement, which tasked the MVD to take "every necessary

measure to ensure public order and protect lawful interests."<sup>27</sup> Similarly, the relief of the First Secretaries of Armenia and Azerbaijan in May, 1988, even though it was officially done by the Republic Central Committees, will likely have little direct effect in resolving the basic problems in the Republics.

Although the Russians at one time willingly accepted their role as the provider for the other republics, the continual, seemingly one-way assistance has become more and more difficult to substantiate in their eyes. In 1965, shortly after the fall of Khrushchev, the Moscow Oblast Komsomol Committee formed a group called *Rodina*, or Motherland, the first officially-recognized Russian nationalist organization. This group was the forerunner of the *Pamyat*, or Memory, society, a right-wing movement whose anti-Semitic, anti-Western views are gaining a larger and larger following. They are attempting to strengthen and raise the nationalistic patriotism of the Russian people,<sup>28</sup> and have taken Gorbachev's attempts to raise the pride of the entire nation, and shifted it towards the Russians alone. There is a possibility that this nationalism could be turned towards a more moderate, universal patriotism,<sup>29</sup> but, at least in the short term, this cannot be considered to be too likely, despite some evidence in the spring of 1988 that there may be a moderate backlash as a result of a growing recognition of some of the extremism of the more radical leadership.<sup>30</sup> It is far more likely that there will be increased concern and frustration among the Russians, with attendant stiffening of attitudes and intensified Russian nationalist patriotism.<sup>31</sup> This is a vicious circle, one

very difficult to break.

One could hardly invent a more complex combination of social, political, economic, religious, and language issues which together make up this nationalities problem. In fact one could argue that there is not a single problem, but rather as many problems as there are nationalities, plus a few extra thrown in for good measure. However, notwithstanding the attention given to the problems in the Baltics, Ukraine, Georgia, and to the Volga Germans, Crimean Tatars, and Jews, there can be little doubt that the Central Asian Republics offer the greatest and most important challenge to the Soviet Union. They occupy a strategically vital area, and are linked by tradition, race, and religion more closely to their sometimes volatile neighbors to the south than to their countrymen to the north. Their numbers are growing far faster than the rest of the country, and with every second child born in the Soviet Union a Central Asian, the Russians will probably soon be outnumbered. Despite Soviet efforts to produce "the new Soviet people" based on a Russian model, they have been unable, so far, to make major headway in the area. The Central Asians have accepted Soviet efforts at education, health benefits, industrialization, and modernization, but have not in return given their entire allegiance to Moscow, despite the amazing economic and social progress which has been made. A gap has been created between the Soviet Muslims and their re-awakening religious compatriots outside the Soviet Union, but the gap between them and the rest of the Soviets remains a much larger one.<sup>32</sup> As Gorbachev has recognized, the

problem is not decreasing in size, but threatens to grow larger and larger, and indeed is the most fundamental and vital question facing Soviet society.

#### THE MILITARY PARALLEL

During an interview on the weekly Soviet Armed Forces TV program "I Serve the Soviet Union" in January, 1988, Army General Dmitri T. Yazov, Minister of Defense, stated: "What then is the social profile of the contemporary soldier? First of all is the Armed Forces social composition, which naturally, is the same as the rest of our society."<sup>33</sup> Today the Red Army and Navy are a microcosm of the Soviet Union, and their ethnic distribution reflects that of the country as a whole. In turn, the ethnic problems of the country are reflected in the military.

Although the ethnic mixing of soldiers is a relatively recent concept, conscription itself was a very old practice in Russia, with the first law on a draft being declared by Peter the Great in 1699. Under this law, all men, including serfs, were liable for service.<sup>34</sup> Obligation to serve, on the other hand, was not universal, but was based on a quota system applied to landholders, with the number called up dependant on the requirements of the army. In practice, service in the army was restricted to Russians, although a few other nationalities, particularly Tatars, were drafted, and a number of non-Russian officers were hired. As well, some other nationalities were used in auxiliary units.<sup>35</sup> During the 18th Century, the actual number

who served was small, but tours were very long: in fact, for the useful life of the draftee. Terms of service were gradually reduced, to 25 years in 1793, and to 20 years in 1834. The Tsar therefore had a relatively large, long-service army available at his call, but there was no mobilization base for expansion.<sup>36</sup> In 1874, Alexander II made a move towards a system of short service conscription, but soldiers were still drawn primarily from the ethnic groups of western Russia, the traditional Slavic areas, and officers were almost exclusively Russians or Baltic Germans. There were very few Asians in the Imperial Army.<sup>37</sup>

Conscription was expanded during WW I, providing millions of men for the disastrous war efforts of Tsar Nicholas II and his military leaders. When the Communists took control in 1917, they banned conscription, considering it to be a class-driven instrument of oppression, but were forced to reinstitute the law scarcely six weeks later, in order to provide sufficient manpower for the new Red Army. At the same time, the national regions which had declared their independence raised their own armies. Some of these fought for the Reds and others for the Whites, depending on the particular national interests at the time.<sup>38</sup> By 1920 the Reds had prevailed, and there was sufficient stability to allow the government to reintroduce conscription.<sup>39</sup> At the Ninth Party Congress, in 1920, it had been announced that there would be a peacetime Soviet Army based on universal service, but with a gradual shift from a standing army to a territorial militia system.<sup>40</sup> Total service requirements, very similar to those of today, included premilitary training, a period of active duty

service and finally, reserve service.<sup>41</sup> At the time, this system would have created a relatively small regular force and a very large reserve, with the reserve force based on regional ethnic groups---in effect, national armies in the Republics.

Initially, however, the Red Army did not stray far from the ethnic pattern of its Tsarist predecessor, and it was not until 1928 that men of Central Asia were even subjected to a draft. Regiments did become regionally organized, but although the soldiers may have been primarily from the local ethnic group, the officers were still Russian, a situation again not unlike that of today. There is evidence that the non-Russian troops were even then resentful of this unequal situation.<sup>42</sup> During the 1930's, soldiers of ethnic minorities were distributed more equitably throughout the army in more uniformly mixed units, but the officers continued to be drawn mainly from the Russians, or at least from the Slavic nationalities. At the same time, there was a move away from the militia forces, which had not really been that well-developed anyway, towards an unaugmented regular force, a much larger standing army.

The tremendous manpower demands of the Great Patriotic War made necessary a suspension of the restrictive terms of the draft laws.<sup>43</sup> It also led to a reversal of the attempt to create an ethnic balance in the Red Army, as it was found to be expedient to create national formations. Among these were two Kazakh Guards Divisions; Latvian and Estonian Infantry Corps; Georgian, Azerbaijani, Armenian, and Tadzhik Divisions; and,

Lithuanian and Uzbek Infantry Divisions. Some argue that this practice was instituted deliberately in order to strengthen the cohesion of the Army,<sup>44</sup> but it is doubtful that this was the real reason. With the tremendous problems caused by the war, and the overwhelming Soviet initial losses, they no longer had the means to organize the transfers and extra movement of soldiers required in order to achieve an ethnic balance in all of their units. It was therefore more likely to have been simple convenience and ease of administration, particularly in view of the fact that a better form of ethnic mixing could perhaps have prevented some of the wholesale desertion of soldiers of the non-Russian nationalities to the Nazis, and the German successes in recruiting in the POW camps. (These men and other former Soviet citizens into the German Army provided as much as 20% of the German Army on their Eastern Front).<sup>45</sup> Despite their later crude and cruel treatment of the people of the occupied areas, the Germans were probably considered to be a lesser evil than the Russians. Stalin's harsh pre-war nationalist policies, including the forced collectivization of peasant farms and the resultant famine, and the mass deportations of entire national groups, were clearly remembered.

After the war, Stalin undertook a program of incredible retributions and deportations which have been termed to have been genocidal in proportion.<sup>46</sup> These memories also undoubtedly colored the Soviet approach to the structure and racial balance of the post-war Red Army.



The post-war need for conscription was formalized in the USSR Constitution itself. The 1939 conscription law, which was also applied after 1945, allowed the call-up of all males between the ages of 19 and 49. Those assigned to the army were to serve for two years; those to the border troops, three years; those to the air force or coastal defence, four years; and those to the navy for five years. In 1950, the army tour length was increased to three years, and in 1955, the navy tour was reduced to four. Perhaps as an incentive to continue their schooling, those with an advanced education were required to serve for only one year. After their term of service, all conscripts were assigned to the reserves.

The 1967 USSR Law of Universal Military Service was taken into effect the year after its proclamation. The major change which it introduced was the reduction in time of service by a year, to two years for the land and air forces, and three years for naval forces. This had a significant impact on the size of the labor force, which was chronically short of people, particularly in the Russian Republic, and may in fact have been the driving factor behind the change. The military was compensated in three ways: by the reduction of the minimum draft age to 18, the age at which most young men finished their schooling; by a supposedly more comprehensive system of pre-draft military training; and by additional military training with the reserves, after completion of the reduced term of service. The call-up took place twice each year, in spring and fall, corresponding with releases after service was completed.<sup>47</sup> The result was that the

army, including the air force, had four groups with varying experience in service at any one time, and the naval forces had six. This law remains in effect today, and with only minor changes, provides the basis for the conscription process in the Soviet Union. The entire system provides the framework for the citizen army of the Soviet Union, and gives the Soviets the ability to quickly become a nation under arms.

The procedure officially begins at age 16, when when all young men and women start their compulsory two years of training under the All-Union Voluntary Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Navy, more usually known by its acronym (in Russian), DOSAAF. Although most observers begin their description of the conscription system with DOSAAF, the training of youths and children really starts much earlier, at the age of six, when they first enter school, and at ten, when they join the All-Union Youth Pioneers. The Pioneers, with their omnipresent red scarfs, begin to learn many of the basic tenets of military service, and their feelings of patriotism and respect for things military are channelled and stoked incessantly. The summer camps attended by most children under the auspices of the Pioneers provide an excellent opportunity to continue the teaching, and to introduce some military skills through the Zarnitsa, or Summer Lightning, war games. The camps are organized on a regional basis, and are therefore not ethnically mixed beyond the local balance.<sup>4\*</sup> (In fact, the Soviets may well be missing an ideal opportunity to have a positive impact on ethnic relations by allowing children to live together and learn from each other at

an early age rather than waiting until they join the military to have the chance.) Political training continues in the Komsomol, which youths join at age 14.

DOSAAF training is conducted primarily through schools, and the school administration is responsible for ensuring that the training is carried out properly, although instructors are usually reserve officers. The training itself includes basic military skills, with drill, weapon handling, and minor tactics being stressed. In addition, specialist skills such as radio operator, truck driver, skin diver are taught and practised, as is parachuting. As might be expected, the DOSAAF pre-induction training also includes considerable "military-patriotic education."<sup>49</sup>

Military commissariats in each locality are responsible for issuing draft notices, processing recruits, assigning them to units, and sending them to collection points. When the prospective recruits register, at age 17, the commissariat prepares a dossier on each, using all local sources of information including schools, Komsomol organizations, DOSAAF, places of work, and police. After several interviews, the young man is assigned a rating, a grade indicating suitability for special or technical training, which in turn determines the type of unit to which he will be assigned.<sup>50</sup> Presumably, the dossier, and information forwarded on each draftee, includes his ethnic background. Data on the total numbers available, with ratings, are collected at Military Districts, and compared to requirements for replacement

soldiers in units.

At this point, a higher headquarters, probably the General Staff itself, collates the information on requirements and available personnel. Instructions are given to Military Districts or units to pick up specific numbers of draftees with certain ratings from designated collecting points, depending on the type of unit and ethnic balance desired. The commissariat actually assigns the individuals to each collector (thus opening up great opportunities for bribery or corruption).<sup>51</sup>

There appear to be two basic criteria governing the ethnic distribution of conscripts: first, each unit must be ethnically mixed; and, second, no soldier should be stationed in his home area. The reasons for the first are self-evident, as it is in such an environment that "new Soviet man," a figure of "mythical selflessness, courage, diligence, and wisdom,"<sup>52</sup> can be developed. This reason can be applied to the second criterion as well, although the soldiers are generally not allowed to mix with the local population where ever they are stationed. The real reason behind the prohibition on service near home is more likely to be the fear that, in the event of a crisis which required the local deployment of soldiers, they would side with their national brethren, rather than the Soviet State, whose authority they were being tasked to enforce.<sup>53</sup>

The Soviets painstakingly and proudly describe units which not only have many nationalities represented, but also have them

evenly distributed. In 1987, a tank training regiment in the Baltic Military District was described as having "representatives of 33 nationalities." It also has "nearly 30 different newspaper titles published in the various languages of the USSR" on display in the Lenin Room, the patriotic educational/recreation area established in every unit.<sup>54</sup> A motorized rifle training regiment in the Volga Military District received "more than 20 of the USSR's nations and ethnic groups" in the 1986 fall draft. These included: Russians - 43%; Tatars - 15%; Chuvashes - 12%; Uzbeks - 6.3%; Bashkirs - 5%; Maris - 3%; Ukrainians - 2.1%; Turkmen, Kazakhs, Armenians, and Kirghiz - 2% each; and, Ossets, Georgians, Mordvians, Azerbaijanis, Tadjiks and all others - 5.6%. The same article stresses that, although 20 years ago, there were only "a few people from the Central Asian Republics and Kazakstan in the unit," this would today not be a typical picture, and that the "structure of the national representation in the Army and Navy fully correspond to the structure of the national representation in the country as a whole."<sup>55</sup> Despite these claims, the figures quoted above are not representative of the country as a whole, and there is no apparent requirement to ensure equal ethnic representation in each and every unit. The norms in the ethnic balance of various types of units are:

- In combat units, 80% or more of the strength is Slavic;
- In non-combat units, 70-90% are non-Slavs;
- Non-Slavs in combat units are likely to be assigned support roles, such as kitchen or warehouse duties;
- MVD (internal security) forces are predominantly non-Slavs, with as many as 50-60% Central Asian and Caucasian;<sup>56</sup>

-Construction and railroad units are the "ethnic sponge" of the Red Army, and absorb almost all of the surplus of Moslem soldiers not assigned elsewhere.<sup>57</sup>

The implications of this designed distribution are self-evident.

On discharge, all servicemen are transferred to the reserves, and are eligible for service until age 50. Those 35 and under can be called up a total of four times, each time for three months, for training with their assigned unit. This is apparently a relatively common procedure in order to fill out a unit for an exercise. Reserve officers can be called up more often, and for longer periods, a very unpopular requirement.<sup>58</sup> The regular force ethnic criteria cannot be readily applied to the reserves, as they are normally assigned to an understrength or mobilization division close to their homes, for ease of administration. For the Soviets, there are some potentially serious implications in this procedure, as it could seriously upset the desired ethnic balance in some units in wartime, when they are mobilized. In addition, because many non-Slavs are not trained in the combat arms skills, critical shortages of these specialties could appear in some regions and therefore in some units. There is evidence that this occurred when units in the Turkestan Military District were mobilized in 1979, in preparation for the invasion of Afghanistan. Although it is possible that the Soviets made a deliberate decision to use soldiers from the same ethnic groups as the Afghans, in order to attempt to produce a natural rapport between them, it is apparent that this was not successful, both from the ethnic and combat ability perspectives,

and these initially-deployed soldiers were soon largely replaced by Slavs.<sup>59</sup> Without doubt, this discovery has resulted in some of the later actions regarding nationalities in the military.

Although they do not fall into the category of the conscripted, the professional cadre of officers and extended-service enlisted personnel cannot be forgotten, due both to their numbers, and to the fact that it is they who continue to give the Soviet Armed Forces the predominantly Slavic/Russian character which the Red Army has exhibited since the time of Peter the Great. There are nearly one million officers in the Soviet Armed Forces (they make up 20% of the total), and over 400,000 extended-service NCO's.<sup>60</sup> Although one is beginning to see more and more non-Slavic officers and NCO's, perhaps as a sort of Soviet affirmative action program, they are definitely still in the minority. Among the officers, Russians are an overwhelming majority, making up 83% of the total. It is also reported, and to be expected, that those who come from a non-Russian background are very Russified in their language, habits and approach. The short service NCO's are drawn from across the spectrum of the conscripts, but the extended-service NCO's, the ones with the real authority, are predominantly Slavs, and in particular Ukrainians.<sup>61</sup>

The ethnic balance and attitudes attributed to the military appear to have a striking resemblance to that of the Soviet population as a whole. In theory, conscription should produce a military force truly representative of the nation it supports.

However, in the case of the Soviet Union, this does not appear to be valid, primarily because of the imposed national ethnic factors which must be considered by the military. The Soviet Armed Forces have an artificial ethnic balance of nationalities, but this is done for very specific reasons.

#### A DUAL-PURPOSE MILITARY

The primary purpose of any military force is first and foremost the defense of their nation, and the Soviet Armed Forces have this role enshrined in their Constitution. Article 31 states in part:

Defence of the Socialist Motherland is one of the most important functions of the state, and is the concern of the whole people. In order to defend the gains of socialism, the peaceful labor of the Soviet people, and the sovereign and territorial integrity of the state, the USSR maintains armed forces and has instituted universal military service.<sup>62</sup>

The Soviet Armed Forces are different in many ways. Of particular note, however, is their role in the political and social education of the nation, one which is perhaps hidden and implied in their Constitution, in the words "defending the gains of socialism." As early as 1923, Stalin saw the military as such an instrument, and Voroshilov, his defense minister, was quoted as saying that "the Red Army has become a unique university."<sup>63</sup> The days of using the military as the primary means to educate the peasants have long passed, but the perceived need to educate the people is still there, and the military are still tasked to do it. The thrust of the current policy was probably



initiated early in the Brezhnev years, when it was realized that a generation gap was developing in the country: a gap between those who had served in the Great Patriotic War and understood the nature and extent of the sacrifices required by Communism, and those who had not and therefore did not. In 1968, Brezhnev said: "In fulfilling military obligations, almost the entire male population of the country serves for some period in the armed forces, and this takes place in the youthful years, when the personality is taking shape and a world view and a politically conscious attitude towards life are being molded. The army therefore becomes an important school of life for our young people and a component part of the entire system of Soviet upbringing."<sup>4</sup> In 1975, Army General A. A. Yepishev, then Chief of the Main Political Directorate of the Soviet Army and Navy, illustrated the continuity of the concept when he stated: "The process of Communist education, begun at home, in school, and at the place of work, a process of all-round and harmonious development of the individual, continues during a person's service in the army. The latter in fact plays the role of nation-wide university which practically all the male citizens of the country finish."<sup>5</sup>

Marshall Ogarkov, in 1982, described "one of the principle missions" of the Soviet Armed Forces, which "has been and remains instilling the ideas of Soviet patriotism and socialist internationalism, pride in the Land of the Soviets and our homeland..."<sup>6</sup> More recent articles continue to stress the educational role of the military. Lieutenant General Professor Kolgon-

ov, the Deputy Chief of the Main Political Directorate, described a "masculine university" on the television program "I Serve the Soviet Union" in December, 1985. This was "a School of upbringing, a School that develops courage, assiduousness, discipline, organization, and punctuality---qualities so essential to a person throughout his life."<sup>67</sup> An long editorial published in Kraznaya Zvezda in June, 1986 stated in part:

...Our Army is correctly described as a school for the fostering of civic responsibility, courage, and patriotism. The moral formation of young people takes place in the military collective. There the serviceman, the sons of all the fraternal union republics, receive lessons in organization, discipline, firm friendship, and comradeship. It is difficult to overestimate the role played in the formation of the serviceman's personality by the collective in which he serves.<sup>68</sup>

In the official tribute to Army and Navy Day published in Izvestiya on 23 February, 1987, Army General Lushev, First Deputy Minister of Defense (and at the time considered to be one of the front-runners for the position of Minister of Defense) described this task of the military:

...The Soviet Armed Forces are an integral part of our society...The army school of life is a unique experience. It promotes the development of young people's social activeness and the all-round, harmonious development of the individual...One of the main sociopolitical trends in the development of the Soviet Armed Forces is the increasingly full assertion of the principles of socialist internationalism in the life of our multi-national military collectives. Relations between soldiers of more than 100 nations and nationalities are strengthened by their fraternal friendship... CPSU nationalities policy in the Armed Forces creates favorable conditions for implementing the principles of internationalism in military building. Increased attention has been paid to the military vocational guidance of young people of different USSR nationalities, and the officer corps is being expanded with representatives of all our country's nationalities...the friendship between servicemen from all parts of the country must be strengthened...<sup>69</sup>

The goals of this national university fall into three broad categories: political/ideological, military, and social. The political/ideological aims are to develop this "new Soviet man", with his Communist ideals and idealism, and dedicated patriotism, combined with a hatred of imperialist aggression. The military education is to prepare the soldier physically, mentally, morally, and psychologically for combat. Finally, the social aims are to promote friendship towards fraternal peoples (i.e. other members of the Warsaw Pact), and to promote unity of the various nationalities of the USSR, enhanced by the Russian-language environment.<sup>70</sup> The basic entity for this instruction is the collective, which, with its carefully mixed ethnic composition, is in theory designed to encourage the different peoples to learn about one another, and break down the cultural barriers.

The Soviet Armed Forces do offer an ideal means to educate the minorities in the Communist way. This way is logically and traditionally also the Russian way. The young man is removed from his familiar home environment, and for two years, when he is at an impressionable age, is subjected to a uniform, mixed society clearly dominated by Russians in language, customs, and culture. The theory is excellent, and given perfect conditions and perfect people, would perhaps work very well. For many years, with only a few exceptions, the Soviets publicly admitted to no major difficulties with the military-as-a-school-of-life concept which they had instituted, but to many observers, both in the Soviet Union and in the West, this was not entirely true.

## GLASNOST STRIKES THE MILITARY

The problems of ethnic distribution in the Soviet military, and the attendant difficulties which may or may not impact on their fighting ability and capacity to sustain combat have been the subject of a number of detailed studies. These were severely hampered by a lack of source material and inability to conduct basic research on the subject, primarily due to the traditional Soviet reticence in this area. They have therefore had to rely on interviews with emigrants and defectors (not always the most reliable of sources, particularly if they have deserted from the military), and careful interpretation of Soviet-published material. Several have commented on the difficulty. Herbert Goldhamer stated: "Naturally enough, tensions among members of different nationalities are only occasionally and very discretely referred to in Soviet military journals and newspapers, although the frequent contrary emphasis that the Soviet nationalities serve together in 'a friendly fashion' may equally reflect an uneasy recognition of a problem."<sup>71</sup> Gregory Lathrop wrote: "Articles on nationality conflict do not appear at all. What one does find are descriptions of how the 'friendships of the Soviet peoples' increases combat readiness."<sup>72</sup>

The continual official denial that relations between ethnic groups in the military were anything but harmonious soon drove the skeptic to the conclusion that there was indeed a problem. The Soviet press, and in particular Krasnaya Zvezda, regularly prints articles and editorials with the clear purpose of indir-

ectly giving direction to readers. Provided that the target reader has the background knowledge to break the code, the action required is quite clear. In the area of ethnic relations among soldiers, successful commanders were stated to be those who demonstrated concern for the proper training and ethnic education of their subordinates. Therefore, in order to be considered to be successful, one had to emulate the example cited. Colonel General Lizichev, Chief of the Main Political Directorate, exhorted officers to "...struggle resolutely against manifestations of rudeness and the leader's remoteness from subordinates." They were to "pay more attention to people," as "Communists must set a personal example...and struggle against so-called communist arrogance..."<sup>73</sup> In a December, 1985 editorial in Kraznaya Zvezda, entitled "Soviet Officers," it was stated that:

Our officer corps was formed from the best representatives of the working class, the kolkhoz peasantry, and the Soviet intelligentsia and it is as multinational as our country. Closeness to people based on class unity, cordial contacts with subordinates, and concern for them are typical of them. The title and mission of a Soviet officer, organizer of personnel training, are lofty ones.<sup>74</sup>

When problems were exposed, it was as an aberration which could be readily solved, provided that the officer was attentive to his duty. In a February, 1986 Kraznaya Zvezda article with the fascinating title "Fellow Countrymen: Notes of a Company Political Worker About Educational Work in a Multinational Military Collective," a young officer described several situations which he had faced. After finding several servicemen in a "quarrel," he determined that a "clique," a "collective within the

collective," had formed, and that they were "conversing in their native language and sharing reminiscences" quite separately from the rest of the group. This aloofness soon began to "show its negative aspects," and they began to "cover for each other and forgive mistakes and violations of discipline." When others reacted and criticized in a "Komsomol fashion," then the quarrel arose. He was able to resolve the problem by talking to the Komsomol activists, a "multinational collective" themselves, who "smiled knowingly and indulgently" and "did what was necessary." He found it necessary to "have a very serious talk" with a soldier who had "got into the habit of referring to comrades by nicknames and epithets with what could be described as 'national overtones' at times." His talk, of course, resolved the situation quite satisfactorily.<sup>75</sup>

There were very few straightforward admissions of a problem, but the solutions to this non-problem were made obvious, as was the need for action of some sort. More recently, however, under the auspices and impetus of glasnost, a number of clearly-stated, openly-critical books, articles, and interviews have started to appear.

Among the first reactions to these criticisms of the military was an August, 1987, Kraznaya Zvezda article entitled "Is the Artillery Firing on Its Own Men...?"<sup>76</sup> One article commented upon in this rebuttal had even gone so far as to suggest that "military-patriotic education be replaced by anti-military-patriotic education," an incredible statement in any con-

text for even the most open of the Soviet press, let alone Kraznaya Zvezda. This defense resulted in even more severe criticism, which in turn led to another Kraznaya Zvezda article, "Polemical Notes: Echo of Malicious Talk," published by the same author in December, 1987.<sup>77</sup> This article described "an increase in the number of young people trying to dodge army service ...mostly young men from so-called prosperous families." Again very defensive in nature, it laid the blame for these problems in the military primarily on poor preparations for military service, and on the "negative phenomena that infected the army, like the whole society, during the stagnation period," that is, during the Brezhnev era.

One of the most controversial of the critical publications appears to have been a novella entitled "100 Days Before the Order," published in the magazine Yunost in November, 1987. This story outlined, in some detail, the "non-regulation relations" which were a feature of military life, and with which "the military could not deal," and which further "disgraced all personnel of our army."<sup>78</sup> The article was apparently initially suppressed by the military, but when it was published, they reacted very strongly, and with surprising candor, on the military television program "I Serve the Soviet Union" broadcast on 16 January, 1988. This program is officially sanctioned, and therefore any item appearing on it can be considered to be a statement of policy. This particular program reported on a meeting between Army General Dmitri T.Yazov, Candidate Member of the Politburo and Minister of Defense, together with the previous-

ly-mentioned Colonel General Volkogonov, who regularly hosted the show, and members of the Writers' Union. As General Yazov himself was involved, the policy statement made is even more relevant. The interview began with the Secretary of the Union stating that there had been stories "in which internal military is depicted in a most unsightly way," referring to the "100 Days" story. General Yazov then introduced General Volkogonov who stated:

... We certainly have problems which point to the fact that not all is satisfactory in the soldier's character. We have instances which we shamefully call irregular behavior. In essence these are twisted relations between servicemen with varying levels of seniority. Yes, this problem did not occur yesterday. It occurred some 25 years ago. At the beginning it was not of a malignant nature---more like a form of hazing after the young soldiers have been sworn in. Gradually, it acquired the force of tradition. The secret of any tradition is in the information which is passed on from generation to generation, from call-up to call-up. This tradition has become so refined that now, in some units, on some ships---I wish to stress that this is not the case everywhere---quite often long-serving soldiers are attempting to palm off some of their difficult or unpleasant duties onto the shoulders of the young soldiers. At the same time, they propagate a simple ideology: Your turn will come. Often this translates into insults against human dignity, rudeness, and even various physical encounters and conflicts... This problem is extraordinarily difficult to solve. Here we are faced with cultural interrelationships, problems associated with *glasnost*, and I would even say, the inculcation of self-esteem, the role of the family, and parents. These problems are being solved. ... "79

The existence of the "irregular relationships" and "non-regulation behavior" has been well documented in the West for some time. Suvrov's Inside the Soviet Army described them as "class relationships".<sup>80</sup> Myagkov, called it "fundamental discrimination between different groups,"<sup>81</sup> based on length of service, in his book Inside the KGB. It has also been called a



"caste system,"<sup>22</sup> and a "master-slave system."<sup>23</sup> In the past, it has been assumed that this practice was at least unofficially condoned, as it did have the effect of maintaining discipline in the barracks and on the training grounds, and because any attempt to eradicate it would result in a black mark on the record of any officer who admitted to having such a disciplinary problem in his unit.<sup>24</sup> Although irregular relations had been mentioned in the Soviet press before this time, it was in the context of a disciplinary problem, not a nationalities problem. The detailed description had never been so clearly provided. General Yazov's sponsorship of an admission that not only did such a problem really exist, but that it was in fact also a real and significant problem as well as an old and unsolved one, is particularly interesting because this statement tied the irregular relationships problem directly to nationality and ethnic problems, possibly for the first time.

With the advent of glasnost, there was a virtual flood of very revealing articles, and although the themes followed the same pattern as some of the earlier ones, they were far more frank. In addition, the earlier articles, placed in the perspective of the linkage between the "irregular relations" and the nationalities problem, become far more revealing. A Kraznaya Zvezda article entitled "Notes of a Military Publicist: National Color," which appeared in April, 1987, began with the words: "There was a fight between two soldiers...," and went on to state: "...This episode was colored by the fact that these two soldiers were of different nationalities...Anyone listening to

the things these two were shouting at one another could say that disrespect was shown for a nation and that national sensibilities and national pride were humiliated and even insulted...It is clear to the reader that there are problems in international education... Manifestations of military comradeship and fraternity in our country always have a national color---figuratively speaking." (The fight turns out to have been over a kitchen duty roster.)\*\* One week after the 30 May, 1987 Politburo meeting which approved the relief of Marshal Sokolov as the Minister of Defense and the major reorganization of the Ministry of Defence and the Air Defence Forces, General Volkogonov, once more appearing on the television program "I Serve the Soviet Union," made reference to "the foreign plane intruding in our airspace" which had "made it clear that there are a number of important serious omissions that exist in the Army and the Navy in the areas of combat readiness, discipline, and organization." He went on to point out that, in the area of discipline, there were "omissions and shortcomings....in particular---and many viewers are aware of this---in some units and on some ships, where we still have the so-called irregular relations in the military collectives...sometimes lowering human dignity and offending someone."\*\*

Possibly the ultimate in glasnost was the admission, in a Kraznaya Zvezda interview with Lieutenant-General of Justice B. S. Popov, Chief Military Prosecutor, in August, 1987, that there had been a mutiny in a military construction unit, and that "all officers and warrant officers were instructed to remain in

subunits round the clock until firm internal order was established in them." The interview went on to state that in some units, not only had the *godkovshchina* (a kind of initiation ceremony) not been eliminated, but in addition, "some commanders, having lost control of the situation, try to cover up for the hooligans rather than relieving them from their responsibilities," thus clearly implying that officers or NCO's were guilty of condoning the events which had caused the problems.<sup>87</sup>

A more recent report of an interview with Vice Admiral A. Korniyenko, Chief of the Baltic Fleet Political Directorate, appeared in Kraznaya Zvezda in April, 1988, under the title "Interview on a Topical Subject: Every Republic in the Crew's Quarters." Among the comments made were:

...the excesses which took place in Kazakhstan and the Baltic Republics...could not fail to impinge on the consciousness and feelings of servicemen ...there were people among them who became introverted and formed cliques based on people's home areas, but others frankly spoke out saying that they were ashamed of their countrymen...The Army and Navy, like the whole country, are multi-national in make-up...and are no strangers to everyday contradictions ...one person insults the national dignity of another--- often in crude terms...Among some of the young people coming into the Navy international sentiments have been relaxed in favor of national egoism, and an ethos of good relations between nations is lacking...Even today it is impossible to find books on the customs and traditions of peoples of the USSR...The issue of sailors with a poor command of Russian is a thorny and delicate one...in the Baltic region this is typical of Estonians above all...In certain units in the Navy's Construction Directorate, the number of such servicemen amounts to 8-9 %...We are obviously looking for a way out of this situation...but all this takes time out of an already busy schedule spent on achieving the main thing---the speediest mastery of military skills. \*\*

Thus glasnost has either pushed, or perhaps allowed, the

military to publicize a problem which, although officially denied, was obviously well-known to every man who had served in the Soviet military, and therefore to most of the country. There are good arguments to substantiate either the view that the military wanted to bring the problem out and into the open, to be solved, or the view that they wished to follow their traditional line and keep it officially under wraps, or possibly even condoned. Certainly, there were proponents of both approaches within the military, and obviously, those favoring the open approach won, probably because that was the one which was politically prudent at the time, and also agreed to by General Yazov. Whatever the reason, glasnost truly struck at the military, particularly in the area of problems with ethnic nationalities. They now have few options open to them, and have little choice but to attempt to define the problems (although they may well have done this many years ago) and to get on with attempting to resolve them.

#### THE PROBLEM FOR THE MILITARY

The Soviet military has two major areas of interest regarding the issue of ethnic minorities in the country as a whole. The first area is their task as the national university, and the second is the effect that the ethnic minorities have on their ability to carry out their stated primary role, to conduct military operations to defend their country. Both these are quite interrelated and interdependent.

The military tasking to create and mold the "new Soviet

man" is both a logical and a traditional one, at least from the Russian perspective. The country's leaders, the vast majority Russians, are most unlikely to willingly accept any degradation in their overall authority and position. This desire to retain their status has always been proven to be uppermost in their minds in the past, and nothing that Mr. Gorbachev has done indicates any change in direction; in fact, if anything, his often-insensitive statements make him appear to be even more a Russian nationalist than his predecessors. There is therefore a real need for a means to unify and "Sovietize" (i.e. Russify) the people. Other than the Party itself, the military is the single nation-wide organization which is completely under the control of the central Soviet government, cutting across all Republic and ethnic boundaries. Even though the people requiring the most "Sovietization" are probably the least likely to perform well as soldiers, the military is clearly not only the best, but also the only, organization suited to carry out the task. It is therefore in turn most unlikely that the government would ever willingly release the military from their role as nation builders. Were they to even consider doing so, they would be making a very fundamental change in concept which has been consistently practised and advertised for so many years that it has become second nature to both the military and to the population. Admittedly, many other principles once considered to be traditional and above change have recently proven to be rather transitory and easily uprooted. However, given the instability of the ethnic situation in the Soviet Union and the many contradictory signals which would be sent by any changes in this practice at this time, it is

probably only remotely possible that the policy of ethnic mixing and instruction would be changed without a real and significant provocation and a fundamental change in requirements, such as a major mobilization or restructuring.

From the point of view of the military, the current policy on nationalities in the Army and Navy has both some strengths and some weaknesses. On the positive side, provided that one accepts that some nationalities are naturally better soldiers than others and that the basic technical skills of some groups are also better than some others, the mixing provides the ability to create a better balance of unit capabilities across the forces as a whole. Coincidentally, they can mix those from urban and rural backgrounds. As well, the military leaders can "stack" selected units, taking advantage of the same general characteristics and abilities of the various groups, and concentrating them where most suitable. In addition, the concerns over the motivation and loyalty of the soldiers of ethnic minorities can be somewhat mitigated by spreading them throughout the military in a coordinated fashion, rather than having them concentrated in units formed on the basis of region and therefore primarily ethnic background. On the other hand, the negative aspects of the present policy do pose some significant difficulties for the military. Most of these fall into the areas of cohesion, or perhaps lack of cohesion, in ethnically-mixed units, and unequal preparation for military service, including language training in school, as well as the more directly military-oriented training conducted in the schools and under the auspices of DOSAAF. The nature of these

potential problems for the Soviet Army and Navy have been studied from several aspects by very competent and well-qualified Western researchers. They are unanimous that there is a problem, but do not agree on its scope or on its probable effects.

#### THE MILITARY PROBLEM - THE WESTERN VIEW

In his book Cohesion: The Human Element in Combat, Wm. Darryl Henderson concludes that the Soviets have really created two armies: the first one, the combat arms, is made up primarily of Slavs, and is cohesive and reliable; and the second, all the non-combat arms, with a mix of ethnic types, is not so cohesive or reliable. However, he believes that the resulting loss of efficiency in these units has less overall effect than would the creation of "national" units throughout the military. Thus, they are able to control the negative effects of ethnic and other sources of conflict under routine, normal conditions, despite a very rigid approach which stifles initiative and encourages strict adherence to established rules and norms. He postulates that cohesion will unravel as leaders and their units are forced to cope with rapidly changing situations."

Richard Gabriel, in The New Red Legions: An Attitudinal Portrait of the Soviet Soldier, finds that although the Soviet Army has a number of strengths, primarily related to its size, equipment, and deployment, it also has a number of stress points which can be gathered into two main areas of weakness: tangential and systemic. The tangential weaknesses are those in the milit-

ary structure which at least in theory could be remedied should it be decided to do so. Among these are the areas of low pay, poor housing, poor food, isolation, a heavy training load, and restrictive leave policies. The systemic ones, however, are endemic to the military and government themselves, and could not be changed without revealing contradictions in the regime or its ideology. Included in this area are problems of a remote and bureaucratic officer corps, the lack of a professional NCO corps, a reliance on prearranged strategy and plans, and, last but not least, ethnic problems and the cadre system. The Soviets are willing to accept these real and potential weaknesses (if indeed they recognize them at all) in order to maintain complete control over the military, but the Red Army has a great potential to disintegrate in battle, despite their perceived high level of combat effectiveness. He states that:

The Soviet soldier is not ten feet tall, neither is he a man of iron with entrails of straw. He is a conscript soldier who sees no point to his military service and who has failed to integrate fully into his military unit through the development of strong primary groups. Within his unit he is a stranger among strangers. We know of the history of military units that came to battle as associations of strangers instead of as a band of brothers is that they tend to fight badly, be unreliable, and break apart under stress.\*°

In his study The Soviet Soldier: Soviet Military Management at the Troop Level, Herbert Goldhamer concludes that Soviet training and operational procedures are probably inefficient rather than ineffective. He lists about a dozen constraints on Soviet military effectiveness, from over-emphasis on things political, through miserliness and disruptions to training caused



by the twice-annual callup, to multinational problems including language difficulties, and racial and religious tensions. He concludes that neither should one accept uncritically some of the then current (1975) images of the Soviet soldier as a sort of superman, but nor should one be persuaded that the Soviet military is "shot through with great weaknesses and subject to so many constraints that its operational effectiveness is seriously compromised."<sup>91</sup>

In a comprehensive study of Warsaw Pact cohesion for the Canadian Operational Research & Analysis Establishment in 1986, Teresa Rakowski-Harmstone and her fellow researchers concluded that there were four important sectors in which the morale of the Soviet Armed forces was affected by problems resulting from changing social trends since the war:

- There has been a revival of Russian nationalism and Imperial historical traditions, brought about by a growing realization that their country is declining in economic and spiritual terms. This has resulted in alienation of non-Russian or Russified groups.
- There is evidence of growing ethnic conflict within the Soviet Armed Forces, despite the fact that the military has had a real impact on the assimilation and integration of the non-Russian nationalities.
- There is evidence of acute social conflict between the officers and the lower ranks, and between NCO's and men.
- There is a conflict between the need to foster initiative and self-reliance, and the traditional centralized and

detailed control.

Despite these problems, the Soviet military are seen as a strong and well-trained force with considerable central cohesion built on an identification with Russia's traditional history and the concept of national defense. In general terms, they would fight with a high level of effectiveness in defense of their country, they would be reliable for the purpose of intervention in the Warsaw Pact, and, in the case of an offensive against the West or the East, effectiveness would benefit from the years of anti-NATO and anti-Chinese conditioning, which would tend to legitimize and "make just" the cause, but only to certain (but ill-defined) point.<sup>92</sup>

Probably the most recent study of this subject is one edited by Alexander Alexiev and S. Enders Wimbush and entitled Ethnic Minorities in the Red Army: Asset or Liability?, published as a Rand study in 1988. Although, as the title implies, they obviously concentrate on the nationalities problems rather than the broader spectrum of potential difficulties which are addressed by some of the other studies, their conclusions are perhaps worthy of note. They point out that there is a wide variance in the conclusions of analysts, at least partially based on the nature of their prime sources of information. Those who rely on what the Soviets themselves publish conclude that although there may be a few minor problems, they are under control, and there is no vulnerability. At the other end of the spectrum, some who wish "to belittle or deny the Soviet military threat... claim that the ethnic problem is so severe that it has virtually in-

capacitated the Soviet armed forces". These editors fall between the two extremes, and indicate that at the very least, this area must be considered as a key issue in any vulnerability study and that as long as the Soviet society has ethnic/nationality problems, the same problems will apply to the military.<sup>93</sup>

Whether or not one agrees in every respect with all of the conclusions of these analysts, there are a number of common threads in their findings. Simply stated, the two most important of these are that the Soviet Armed Forces do have a problem of some magnitude with their concept for the approach to the handling of ethnic minorities, and that this will have at least some detrimental effect on their operational effectiveness.

#### THE MILITARY PROBLEM - THE SOVIET VIEW

The Soviets too have indicated their concern in published comments and articles, although as usual, at least until the advent of glasnost, one had to often read between the lines and apply a sort of principle of inverse proportionality in order to determine what was really being said. In the issue of Soviet Military Review published on 30 December, 1986 Lieutenant-General Sagadat Nurmagambetov, a Kazakh who was then Deputy Commander of the Central Asian Military District, had published an article entitled "The Principles of Fraternity", concluding that "consistent implementation of the Leninist nationalities policy and a strengthening in every way of the friendship of the peoples are a part of the effort to perfect socialism and a way that has

been tested in social practice of ensuring our multi-ethnic Socialist Homeland's prosperity."<sup>4</sup> In an article in the March, 1986 issue of the same magazine, Lieutenant-General Gennady Stefanovsky wrote about "The Cohesion of a Military Collective," advising that the primary source of strength has to be the Party, and that by following the teachings of the Party, leaders can overcome any difficulties and achieve unity in their organization."<sup>5</sup> Articles such as these, accentuating the positive, are perhaps to be expected from this source, as the Soviet Military Review is designed for foreign readership, but articles in Kraznaya Zvezda stressed the same very positive, no-problem approach.

An editorial in February, 1986, just prior to Army and Navy Day, made reference to "a demonstration of the indissoluble unity of the Army and the people...the Soviet Armed Forces constitute the military organization of the socialist state of the whole people, and this unity has assumed a new and high quality with the best features of the multinational Soviet people."<sup>6</sup> The 1987 editorial for the same occasion, attributed personally to General Lushev, one of the First Deputy Ministers of Defense, similarly extolled the "socio-political trends in the development of the Soviet Armed Forces, the increasingly full assertion of the principles of socialist internationalism in the life of our multinational military collectives. Relations between soldiers of more than 100 nations and nationalities are strengthened by their fraternal friendship..."<sup>7</sup> (Surprisingly, the 1988 editorial, two full Kraznaya Zvezda pages by Defense Minister Army

General Yazov himself, made only passing reference to nationalities, with observations such as: "all the nations and ethnic groups rose to fight in the Great Patriotic War."<sup>98</sup> However, as this was the 70th Anniversary of the Red Army, it may have been decided to remain on a higher plane).

Driven by glasnost, the reading between the lines gradually became significantly easier, and the conclusions possibly less tortured, as published criticism became more and more direct and therefore more and more clear. In January, 1987, on the television program "I Serve the Soviet Union", a young commander stationed in Alma-Ata, the capital of Kazakhstan, made the usual positive reference to the Army as "a great school for teaching friendship in the multinational collectives...where youths of more than 100 nationalities get to know one another so closely...forgetting their national differences," adding that he was "helped in his service" by the five nationalities serving in his subunit, because "people learned new things about one another." He went on to state, however, that "commanders must know the national customs of people in order to avoid insulting them accidentally" and that "some people are brought up properly, whereas others are taught from childhood that their nationality is superior in some ways to others...resulting in certain difficulties."<sup>99</sup> In the same month, in an article on a Komsomol Conference for the Pacific Fleet, Army General Lizichev, Chief of the Main Political Directorate, after outlining the Komsomol tasks "to further strengthen military discipline and regulation order, rally multinational servicemen's collectives, and create an at-

mosphere of friendship and troop comradeship in them," was reported to have stated that "changes for the better have occurred in...Komsomol work, and its activeness, militancy, and assertiveness have been enhanced..." He added, however, that "the Komsomol's work today still contains much formalism, meeting mania, boredom, rigid state management and window dressing." The result was that "noisy, ostentatious activity...sometimes coexists with serious deviations from our moral norms and the entire healthy tenor of navy and army life."<sup>100</sup>

It becomes apparent that the Soviet military were clearly publicizing and drawing attention to the nationalities problem in three basic areas, corresponding with the three periods of the service of a conscript: the pre-service training; the actual service in the Army or Navy; and the obligatory later service in the reserves.

The problems with pre-service training appeared to draw much of the attention (a cynic could say that this was the area over which the military had the least direct control and could therefore spread the blame most widely). The most obvious problem, and perhaps the one which at least on the surface could cause the most difficulty in administration, training, and operations, was language. Despite Lenin's statement that "to support a state language is disgraceful" and "indicative of a police state," a common language---Russian---was understandably, and very obviously, stressed.<sup>101</sup> (Lenin did add that "there is no inkling of a police state" in "advocating" the use of Russian to other nat-

ions). In Georgia, in one military commissariat, "80 young people had virtually no knowledge of the Russian language" and "more than 5.5 % have insufficient knowledge of the Russian language."<sup>102</sup> In Kazakhstan, "there are draftees who do not know Russian sufficiently well and so cannot properly demonstrate their abilities in the army."<sup>103</sup> Colonel General M. Popkov, the Chief of the Ground Forces Political Directorate, wrote that "many representatives of the Central Asian Republics, Kazakhstan, and the Transcaucasus do not speak fluent Russian... we take note year after year of the poor knowledge of Russian on the part of many draftees, but things do not improve, particularly in a number of parts of the Uzbek and Turkmen SSR's."<sup>104</sup> The USSR Defense Ministry Collegium, after a meeting in January, 1988, reported that "omissions in preparing young men for service are particularly common in the Transcaucasian and Central Asian Republics, Estonia, and Kazakhstan. Here many draftees have only a poor knowledge of Russian, and there are some who are totally illiterate. In 1983 there were two of them, in 1986---103, and last year---230. Unlikely, but true!"<sup>105</sup> These published comments, a few of many, indicate that the language trends forecast after analysis of the census figures---that knowledge of the Russian language was declining, particularly in the Muslim and Baltic Republics---were in fact probably quite correct.<sup>106</sup> The direct effects of the lack of a common language on entry to the Army of Navy, particularly when there is an absolute requirement for ethnically-mixed units, and when so many alternate languages are involved, are readily apparent---there would be a real detrimental effect on all aspects of operations and training.

The military also attacked the lack of physical fitness among the draftees, who should have received this training and whose level of fitness should have been checked as part of their pre-service indoctrination. A spot check in one Georgian region revealed that "106 out of 227 recruits...could not negotiate the horizontal bars, and only 121 proved able to meet the norms of 'Ready For Labor or Defense', even though, according to reports, all students had successfully passed...there is a simple explanation for this--- most schools have no equipment."<sup>107</sup> As well, "those called up for military service from Tajikistan are less well developed physically than their contemporaries from other areas of the country."<sup>108</sup> Similarly, from Kirgizia, "only 40 % of the conscripts match up to the norms...and in the case of the Nayrın area the figure sinks to 18-20 %."<sup>109</sup> In April, 1988, Pravda reported that, although in the Belorussian SSR problems were being "solved in a comprehensive manner...not more than 10-15 % of teenagers in some rayons of Moldavia, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan proved up to the 'Ready for Labor and Defense' standards."<sup>110</sup> Without exception, all the regions with problems were south of the Russian Republic.

Pre-draft specialist training was also described as a problem area. The April, 1988 Pravda article quoted above also stated that there were "many omissions in educational work among young people of draft age," and that "one-half the students at rural vocational and technical schools and some DOSAFF schools in Turkmenistan, Urdmurt SSR, and Tomsk Oblast have had



to retake their driver's permit tests." It went on to observe that "similar shortcomings also exist in the training of electricians and radiotelegraph operators."<sup>111</sup> Again, the difficulties were in the southern Republics.

Another part of the pre-service preparation which was found to be lacking was the proper screening by Commissariats. An article described a recruit who "had a weakness for smoking hashish before being drafted...it was regrettable that those who drafted him had not noticed this."<sup>112</sup> General Yazov, in an address to a group of Military Commissariat leaders, stated that "many of the negative phenomena we encounter in the Army and Navy stem from the fact that the military commissariats simply do not know the people they are calling up for military service..." He went on to further detail their problems.<sup>113</sup> General Lizichev noted that some officers in Commissariats were "not noted for honesty and devotion to the cause." He observed that "the bourgeois mentality of timeservers, observers from the sidelines and spiritually impoverished consumers are incompatible" with officers in Commissariats, and that was "necessary to switch more resolutely from calls for enhanced responsibility to actual responsibility for assigned work."<sup>114</sup> Once more the non-Slavic republics were stressed as the troublesome areas.

However, from the Soviet point of view, by far the most alarming highlighted shortcoming of the pre-service training was the lack of proper patriotic grounding, which led to insufficient enthusiasm for military service, and in turn to the attitude

which bred the "irregular relations," the surface indicators of the nationalities problems. Surprisingly, this problem was pointed out as early as 1982, by Marshal Ogarkov, in his article "Always Prepared to Defend the Fatherland." He stated that young people are typically "politically naive" and have an "inadequately responsible attitude towards labor." They "underestimate the threat of modern war" and the "resulting unconcerned attitude, indifference and complacency ...are dangerous phenomena which could have grave consequences."<sup>115</sup> (He also warns of the dangers of poor physical fitness and Russian language ability among draftees). Once again, glasnost was stretched to the limit as papers published reports of "abstract pacifist views expressed here and there,"<sup>116</sup> and of "draftees including representatives of various religious sects who refuse to take the military oath and take up weapons."<sup>117</sup> There were "cases of young people evading callup, including on religious grounds."<sup>118</sup> Others did not "respond to their draft notices in time" and some "simply avoided responding...because they do not have a sufficiently developed sense of patriotism, and perhaps there is insufficient preparatory work being done to properly prepare the youth for the draft."<sup>119</sup> There were also "attempts by some people with ideologically harmful views" to divert youths from "socially important matters, to wrest them from the Komsomol, to set them against war and labor veterans..."<sup>120</sup> A reporter wrote of people "trying to cultivate an incorrect impression of the army today along with a cowardly and disparaging attitude to military service and a desire to dodge the draft..."<sup>121</sup> In a December, 1987 meeting with writers conducted by General Yazov, it was

reported that "a pacifist, abstract, peace-making mentality, after all, would not have allowed us to talk with the United States as equals or achieve the signing of a treaty on medium-range and shorter-range weapons."<sup>122</sup> This railing against pacifist attitudes by those who pretend to be the only real advocates of peace is one of the real ironies of the *glasnost* campaign, but it does indicate the depth of Soviet concern. It is also particularly noteworthy as it appears to be directed in good measure towards religiously-oriented pacifism. This in turn aims the comments towards the ethnic minorities, and intensifies the nationalities issues.

In addition to the pre-service training, the second basic area addressed in the publicizing of the nationalities problems was that of the difficulties being encountered during the conscripts' term of service in the Army or Navy. The exposure of the "irregular relations", its implications, and the effect of this practice on ethnic relations has already been outlined.

The third and final area addressed in the campaign was the post-service period, or term of obligatory reserve service. In fact, it is only recently that Soviet press articles have made any mention of reserves, and then in the positive sense of their potential, rather than what they have not been doing in the past. There have been a number of announcements concerning the formation of councils or associations of reservists in various parts of the country, from the Central Asian Republics to the Russian Republic and Moscow itself. The notices usually indicated that

topics of concern were assistance and recognition for veterans (particularly those who served in Afghanistan), remembrance of soldiers who had been killed (again with emphasis on Afghanistan), assistance to servicemen in the reserves, and increased work in the area of the "military-patriotic upbringing of young people."<sup>123</sup> A CPSU Central Committee Meeting in February, 1988 addressed the question, and issued a resolution. Noting that there had been "a marked increase in the social and political activeness of young men who have served in the USSR Armed Forces," and that "clubs and councils of internationalist servicemen are being created in a number of the country's republics and oblasts," there was "a committed discussion...of the problems of preparing young people for service." Agencies of the government were instructed to assist the "enterprising group of ex-servicemen in preparing the next rally on questions of the further activation of reserve servicemen's participation in the military-patriotic education of young men and boys..."<sup>124</sup>

Thus, it is readily apparent that the Soviets indeed are aware of, and have probably studied, this area in considerable depth before coming to a conclusion very similar to that of the Western analysts; that there is a nationalities problem, and that it could affect their performance in battle. Although they may have admitted the problem, at least in oblique terms, before the advent of glasnost, they have been given the opportunity (or perhaps the opportunity has been thrust upon them with little option on their part) to break down and publicize the issues involved. They have publicly identified some details, including

the fact that it involves not only military service as such, but also the pre- and post-service periods. Perhaps more importantly from their perspective, they have also been given the opportunity to attempt a solution to the problems---through perestroika.

### PERESTROIKA STRIKES THE MILITARY

After only two months in office, in April, 1985, Mr. Gorbachev gave his first major speech, at the Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee. He detailed the primary problems which he saw to be facing the Soviet Union: potential political destabilization, and military retardation. More importantly, he outlined two of the means selected to solve, or at least to mitigate, them: the cleansing of the party apparatus, including the restoration of control over regional party committees, and acceleration of technical progress.<sup>125</sup> Within the area of pure technical progress, he focussed on the need for what he termed to be *uskoreniye*, or acceleration, for more effective use of human resources. (The term *perestroika*, although used sparingly in this speech, did not become the catchword until some time later). *Uskoreniye* included the need to reinforce order and discipline, to hold workers responsible for their actions, and to institute more creative forms of discipline.<sup>126</sup> It therefore had great potential for impact on the nationalities question in the military, and the senior leadership should have been interested, particularly in this area of the human factor. Despite this clear direction, they appeared to have the overly confident and secure

attitude that they were above the requirements of uskoreniye. This was based on the opinion either that the need for reform was primarily directed towards the economic sectors, and not towards them, or that Gorbachev had not yet proven that he had actually consolidated his position sufficiently to institute such an ambitious and radical reform.

It does appear that the Political Directorates, the arm of the Party within the military, were assigned at least some responsibility for the implementation of some of the measures. Editorials in Kraznaya Zvezda, mentioning the April Plenum, called for new stress to be placed on closeness to the people, to exactingness, and to personal responsibility. Senior officers who spoke at Party and other gatherings criticised the political and party organs for their lack of activity and example.<sup>127</sup> Despite this, little real progress was made.

In Moscow, during the summer and fall of 1985, it was rumored that Gorbachev had held an unprecedented meeting with nearly all the senior military officers, including headquarters staffs and the Military District and Fleet Commanders. The meeting, held in Minsk in July, was apparently a straightforward warning from the General Secretary to the soldiers. Major General Yuri Lebedev (an unidentified officer quoted in a November, 1985 News-week article) provided a statement attributed to Gorbachev: "...we now need energetic leaders who can command and communicate, people with initiative who are competent in their work...The time has come to reconstruct..."<sup>128</sup> The fact that there was such a

meeting, as well as the nature of the direction given by Gorbachev, was more or less confirmed in an article entitled "Restructuring is Everyone's Cause," published in Kraznaya Zvezda in March, 1987. In this article, Marshal Sokolov, giving a briefing, is reported to have "dwelt on a number of most important points previously raised" by Gorbachev at "meetings of leading cadres in Minsk." Sokolov further "stressed that the implementation and deepening of restructuring should lead us gradually to a new standard of Army and Navy combat readiness."<sup>129</sup>

Even after this supposedly clear direction, the military did not appear to particularly support the program, and paid only lip service to the requirements of perestroika (as it was beginning to be called) in the general buildup to the February, 1986 Congress. This was in decided contrast to other sectors, in which the propaganda machinery was in full swing. During the Congress, the General Secretary in his keynote speech advised the military that the Central Committee and Politburo itself were "devoting unremitting attention to the country's defense capability...and to strengthening military discipline." Further, "our Army should be a school for instilling civil responsibility, courage, and patriotism."<sup>130</sup> These words leave little doubt as to his intent and what he saw to be the tasks for the Army and Navy, particularly in the areas of leadership and interpersonal relationships.

Still, the military did not really enter into the spirit of perestroika. Newspaper editorials and articles, while parroting the words of the speeches, only barely hinted at a military

program to impliment them, particularly in the area of human relations or on the nationalities question. At a Ground Forces Council Meeting on 14 February, 1986, Army General Ivanovsky, Commander in Chief of the Ground Forces, stated that their purpose was to "work on improving military discipline and enhancing organization and order in the spirit of the party's contemporary demands," and emphasized "the importance of a concrete, business-like, profoundly thought-out approach to resolving the current tasks in every unit...and of a resolute struggle against lack of self-criticism, formalism and laxity."<sup>131</sup> Plans were being initiated, but then this was almost a full year after the concept of perestroika was initially outlined. Their desire to wait until after the Congress in order to see how the General Secretary's message was received was understandable and perhaps even prudent, but the military leadership still did not react. A Kraznaya Zvezda editorial of 11 March, 1986, on the subject of the Congress, made absolutely no mention either of the human factor or improvements in the area of personnel.<sup>132</sup> Marshal Sokolov, in an address to the Ministry of Defense Party Aktiv about the Congress, on 21 March, again mentioned neither nationalities nor discipline.<sup>133</sup> There was, however, an indication of things to come in the words of Army General Lizichev, Chief of the Main Political Directorate, and probably the one charged with the introduction of the program into the military. In a Kraznaya Zvezda article on 19 March, he wrote that "inertia, formalism, indifference, the habit of submerging vital matters in empty talk, and 'feigned restructuring' are particularly unacceptable now."<sup>134</sup> Despite some publicity, organized primarily



by the Political Directorates, it was obvious that the inertia in the implementation of perestroika had not been budged.

In July, 1986, Kraznaya Zvezda published a report on a Far East Military District Party Aktiv meeting attended by Marshal Sokolov. The primary speaker was Army General Yazov, who was then the District Commander. He supported perestroika in the strongest possible terms, and challenged the military to get behind the program:

Unfortunately in many collectives the move towards a new work quality and new methods of leadership is taking place slowly, the old ways are holding people back, and inertia is still strong...There can be no resting on one's laurels, even less can attempts to embellish reality and gloss over or conceal shortcomings be tolerated...Distortions are incompatible with communist morality...It is time to switch from just talking about the remoteness of some officers and to make them strictly accountable for dereliction of their duties which require them to show concern for their subordinates...There must be spiritual contact with his subordinates. Manifestations of vulgarity, conceit, and arrogance must be given the strictest Party assessment.<sup>135</sup>

It is not really surprising that he came to the attention of the General Secretary, who visited Vladivostok only several weeks later and undoubtedly met him there. Yazov was called to Moscow to take over as Deputy Minister for Personnel the following January, shortly after the next Central Committee Plenum.

At the Plenary Meeting, Gorbachev, perhaps understandably chafing at the very slow progress being made in the adoption of his plans, called for "truly revolutionary, comprehensive transformations in society."<sup>136</sup> His speech was the strongest yet in his push to get society moving, and was apparently the catalyst

(together, perhaps, with the arrival of Yazov) which started the military on the way. Senior officers soon began to speak out, fully supporting all aspects of perestroika. Marshal Sokolov, in a Pravda article on 23 February, stated that:

...The shortcomings in cadres work that were pointed to at the CPSU Central Committee January Plenum occur in the Armed Forces too...One of the most crucial sectors of the restructuring in the Armed Forces is the further strengthening of the discipline and organization of personnel, the rallying of multinational collectives, and the establishment of strict regulation order everywhere...The Armed Forces, like the country as a whole, are in the initial stage of restructuring.<sup>137</sup>

An editorial in Kraznaya Zvezda on 28 February continued in the same vein:

Like the entire country, the Soviet Armed Forces are living for restructuring, and commanders, political organs, staffs, and party organizations are persistently mastering new work forms and methods and seeking to remove from the road everything that hinders the harmonious, efficient life and activity of troops and naval forces. An innovative approach and questing are more essential today than ever in enhancing the combat readiness of units and ships, strengthening military discipline, and uniting multinational Army and Navy collectives...<sup>138</sup>

Words like these, repeated regularly in Kraznaya Zvezda, indicated that some movement was finally taking place, and that perestroika was starting to impact on the military---two years after the General Secretary spoke at his first Plenum.

If the military needed any further proof that Gorbachev was not only most serious, but also most unforgiving of error, it was given them most clearly when the Rust incident, the landing of the light plane on Red Square in June, 1987, led to the relief of

Marshal Sokolov, and Chief Marshal of Aviation Aleksandr Koldunov, Commander in Chief of the Air Defense Forces, together with scores of other officers. The appointment of General Yazov to replace Marshal Sokolov was a clear indication of the priority of perestroika and the future direction of the military as long as Gorbachev remained in power. As more and more was published on the subject, the emphasis began to emerge, and this emphasis included the nationalities problem.

#### PERESTROIKA AND THE NATIONALITIES IN THE MILITARY

General Yazov, either through design or inclination, immediately became publicly involved in the restructuring program within the Armed Forces, particularly in the area of what became known as the human factor, a collective euphemism for any matter affecting personnel, including nationalities questions. Although a departure from the practice of his predecessor, this should probably not be considered to be too unusual, bearing in mind his previous position as Deputy Minister for Personnel, and his relative lack of experience on the General Staff and with political and operational matters at that level. Whereas Marshal Sokolov spread his activities across the whole spectrum of military affairs, from personnel matters through training and arms control to doctrine, General Yazov and Marshal of the Soviet Union Sergei Akhromeyev, the Chief of the General Staff, appear to have split the areas of primary interest, with Akhromeyev concentrating on operational matters and arms control, and Yazov on perestroika and personnel matters. This is perhaps somewhat indicative of

the priority finally being placed on perestroika, and is also a sign of some restructuring in organization and procedure in the Ministry of Defense itself.

Strangely, there does not appear to have been a single, coordinated, overall plan for the implementation of perestroika. Rather, there was initially a series of ill-defined programs, which gradually became more and more refined as the plan was developed. At first, it was a shotgun approach, with the familiar exposure of problems (although much more explicitly expressed, as glasnost continued to flourish), and pontificating in generalities about the actions required to rectify them. A two-page Kraznaya Zvezda editorial of 26 August is rather typical. After reference to the "many shortcomings" revealed at a June meeting of the Moscow Air Defense District Party Aktiv (little wonder, since most of the officers had been relieved), it was indicated that perestroika was progressing, but that "only the first steps have been taken, and changes are taking place slowly and unevenly, and in some places not at all satisfactorily ... revolutionary renewal does not come easily to those military cadres who have become accustomed to idleness." It went on to suggest that changes were required to be made to officer cadres, theories of troop control, troop training and education, military art, military science, the work style of commanding officers, staffs, political organizers, party organizations, military regulations, and so on and so on. It concluded by stating that "this is no easy task, but one requiring the mobilization of forces, concentration and discipline, boldness and determination, and,

most of all, concrete action,"<sup>139</sup> but, in fact, no concrete action was ever detailed.

Gradually, as more and more speeches were made and editorials and articles were published, it became apparent that there were three basic areas within the military itself which were targets for the program: quality of training (both political and military), the establishment of regulation order, and finally, the strengthening of organization and discipline. In fact, in his Victory Day article, published in Pravda on 10 May, 1988, General Yazov stated (albeit perhaps after the fact) that these three were the "main avenues of restructuring."<sup>140</sup> The desire to improve the quality of training is always an objective of any military organization, and there is nothing unusual in them singling out this area for attention, or even giving it a top priority. The other two targets, though, are closely related to their ethnic nationalities problems, and are to a large measure directed against the "irregular relations" which they had come to recognize as one of the major contributing factors to one part of the problem. Action was required both to relieve the difficulties directly affecting their operational effectiveness which were being identified in this area, particularly as the civil unrest grew more and more evident, and to fulfill their role as the national university.

Their main attack was aimed at the primary target of all of perestroika, the individual responsibility of leaders at all levels. "One-man command", a basic concept of Leninism which has

risen and fallen in emphasis and practise depending on the politics of the time, once more ascended in importance. Under this concept, which was clearly and regularly spelled out for them, commanders are "invested with full administrative power with respect to their subordinates" and are empowered to "take decisions, give orders and instructions, and organize work to fulfill them." More importantly, however, commanders "bear full personal responsibility to the Communist Party and Soviet government for the constant combat readiness of their...units, and for the combat and political training, education, martial discipline, and political and moral state of the personnel. Power and responsibility are...merged together in the commander's activity."<sup>141</sup> Although these concepts may be axiomatic to most Western military leaders, this was not necessarily so in the Red Army, or indeed in Soviet society, and hence have become one of the pillars of the perestroika program.

The need for better discipline and a better example by leaders was stressed. In an address to a graduating class at a Military College in Moscow, General Yazov stated that there were instances of "breach of discipline, crimes, and mutual relations contrary to regulations" because officers did not always "organize life and service according to the regulations." He stressed that "only he who himself is impeccable in execution and organizes his service and his mutual relations with subordinates strictly according to regulations has the moral right to command others."<sup>142</sup> Military Prosecutors publicly discussed their work in supervising the application of regulations, indicating that

some commanders were not "stopping and investigating violations of the law." Some were "lying low" or even "conniving with violators" and were not setting a personal example. Military construction units (the ethnic sponges) were cited as having a "particularly large number of these violations."<sup>143</sup> The legitimacy of the campaign was authenticated in a Kraznaya Zvezda editorial by recalling that "V.I. Lenin's behest is more topical than ever before: '...It is necessary to ensure that, come what may, discipline and subordination are implemented with merciless severity'."<sup>144</sup> This did not bode well for those who did not fully support the program, or even those who attempted to downplay its significance or ignore it altogether.

In January, 1988, there was a shift in emphasis towards cadre activity and enhancement of the human factor through what was termed in a Kraznaya Zvezda editorial to be "further democratization of Soviet society."<sup>145</sup> This was identified as "the new, second stage of restructuring" in this same editorial. As well, General Yazov's replacement as Deputy Minister for Personnel, Army General D. Sukhorukov, similarly identified a "new stage of restructuring" in an interview several weeks later.<sup>146</sup> In this interview, he decried "the stagnation phenomena...built up over many years," as well as "bureaucratism" and "formalism." He indicated that "last year...a number of people, including senior officers, were dismissed from their posts for omissions in their leadership."<sup>147</sup> Clearly, this was a warning to those who had still not yet understood the seriousness of the program, and who had refused or ignored the need for action to rectify the

problems which were being exposed, including that of the nationalities and ethnic relations, through the glasnost campaign described earlier in this paper. This second stage appears now to be concentrating on improving the interpersonal relationships, the "irregular relations" which have been identified as being at the root of many of the ethnic problems in the military.

Having started on the internal program within the military itself, the leaders next turned to the problem of poor preparation for military service also described earlier. Although a long, two-part expose of the shortcomings had been published in a Kraznaya Zvezda article entitled "How Are Things, Draftee?" in November, 1987, perestroika, by name or concept was surprisingly not mentioned a single time.<sup>148</sup> The official announcement of the introduction of the expanded program was made by Army General Lizichev at a DOSAAF seminar in Moscow in January, 1988. He stated that "restructuring has also embraced the entire system of preparing young people for military service and of moulding in them the qualities required of the Motherland's defenders."<sup>149</sup> Obviously, their coordination was improving, as the glasnost campaign which highlighted the poor preparations, particularly the lack of Russian language training, and the lack of enthusiasm for the draft intensified at about the same time. At the DOSAAF Congress the very next month, it was announced that the purpose of the Congress was to "discuss new, more effective forms and methods of patriotic education and propaganda of military knowledge among youth."<sup>150</sup>



At the same DOSAAF Congress, they proved beyond doubt that they were now operating from the basis of a well-coordinated program, when they closed the loop to include all three segments of military service (the pre-training, regular forces, and reserves) in the perestroika process. The announcement was made that there had "recently been a perceptable increase in the social and political activeness of young servicemen and reserve officers, particularly those who have performed their internationalist duty in Afghanistan." Under direction of Komsomol and Party organizations, they were becoming involved in the "young people's military patriotic education."<sup>151</sup> In the same week, there was an inaugural meeting of a "Moscow City Council of servicemen in the reserves of the USSR Armed Forces," at which the "military-patriotic upbringing of young people," and methods to assist in their training were discussed.<sup>152</sup> Other, similar announcements from other republics followed.

The problem of Russian language ability among conscripts from other Republics does not appear to be a target for perestroika, but is being handled outside that program. Interestingly, there appears to be a potential disconnect developing between the military and the state leaders in this area. The military are still complaining about the lack of ability in Russian. For example, in April, 1988, at a Party meeting in Georgia, the Military District Commander noted that "certain draftees have only a poor knowledge of Russian, complicating their army service."<sup>153</sup> On the other hand, the civil leaders, obviously concerned about

the rising nationalism, are encouraging bilingualism, stressing that "Russian became the language of inter-nation communication for historic reasons and not as a result of a decree from above," and that "every national language must feel it has full value." The Central Committee and the Kazakh Republic government have approved special resolutions to improve language training in order "to establish bilingualism (voluntarily, of course)."<sup>134</sup> The voluntary nature of bilingualism will naturally reduce the stress placed on the non-local (i.e. Russian) language, compounding the difficulty for the military. This area bears watching in the future.

Unfortunately, it is a little too close to the events to be able to determine with even a marginal level of confidence the potential effectiveness of all of the measures being taken in the name of perestroika. However, taken in conjunction with the other facets of the program, particularly in the civilian sector, it would seem entirely possible, and even probable, that some progress could be made, provided that the military continue to support the program, and that the pressure continues to be applied with the same enthusiasm. There have been no indications that they are not now working on the side of perestroika, and, under glasnost, the debate is certainly being allowed to continue in their press. In early April, there was even another report in Kraznaya Zvezda of what was actually termed to be a "mutiny" at a VUZ (military prep school) as a result of poor organization and leadership,<sup>135</sup> and there were indications that strong follow-up action is being taken.<sup>136</sup>

It therefore appears that the military, after a slow and uncoordinated start, are proceeding with perestroika, using it to tackle a number of their problem areas, including that of the ethnic nationalities. Although it may be too early to be certain, there are indications that the program does have potential to be of value to provide a means to resolve or at least assist in the resolution of some of these problems.

#### PERESTROIKA-A SOLUTION?

In examining the nationalities in the Soviet military, we have seen that there is indeed a problem for them. It is old, well-rooted and parallels a nation-wide problem which is both growing larger and accelerating in rate of growth. There are two facets to the military problem, both affecting their operational effectiveness: the immediate one of potential degradation of cohesion through language difficulties and outright racial intolerance of varying degrees, and the deeper problem of the requirement to meet national objectives for education and "sovietization" of the youth of the country.

The scope and impact on their operational effectiveness undoubtedly lies somewhere between the extremes represented by the various analysts. It is a larger problem than conceded by the Soviets (although they are admittedly probably coming much closer to the mark under the auspices of glasnost), and yet a smaller problem than that attributed by some Western researchers.

In terms of impact, it is probably greater than that anticipated (at least in an unclassified forum) by the Soviets, but at the same time, is a lesser problem than we would hope. Either way, it is having a significant effect on the Soviet Armed Forces in terms of the administrative complications caused by the need to ethnically mix and therefore move soldiers all over the vast country, to limit the employment of soldiers of certain nationalities, and to conduct either language training or training in other languages. Most importantly, simply examining and taking action to resolve the individual problems arising from the larger overall problem must tie up incredibly large resources and take enormous efforts which could otherwise be put to more productive, militarily-oriented tasks and training. This factor alone must have a very real and very large detrimental affect on their operational effectiveness.

Perestroika will have a great effect on the Soviet military. In the global, indirect, sense, it could result in a stronger national economy which could impact positively on the military. It appears to already have caused a rationalization of some of their procedures for the handling of reserves and pre-training of conscripts. It appears to have potential for increasing the strength of their leadership. It may result in better conditions of service for the Soviet soldier, which may (but may not as well) make him a better soldier. It may result in a different form of discipline in the Red Army, which also may or may not make them more effective as a fighting force. All of these potential positive results of perestroika would in turn

have positive impact on the nationalities problem in the military.

Therefore, one can only conclude that although perestroika might not by itself solve the nationalities problems, it could reduce the effect which ethnic relations are obviously having on their administration and on their operational effectiveness. However, it must be remembered that, although perestroika has been around for over three years, the military have really only accepted it and worked with it for less than a year. From the Soviet military perspective, there are enough encouraging indications and positive results to warrant their continued application of perestroika to suit their desired ends whenever and wherever possible. Provided that there are no major setbacks or government policy changes, this will undoubtedly be their course. From our perspective, unfortunately, we are going to have to wait and see, as is so often the case when studying the Soviet Union, at least until the results of the upcoming Party Meeting are known, and until the fall draft is completed. Then, hopefully with more information available and a better basis of comparison, a somewhat more definitive assessment may be possible. Despite glasnost and perestroika, the enigma inside the riddle still remains.

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